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ABSTRACT

In 1991, two student surveys were developed at Westchester Community College (WCC), in New York, to investigate the reasons for student attrition at WCC. The first survey, the "Student Intent Survey," was designed to discover students' reasons for enrolling at WCC, plans for returning the next semester, and graduation plans; while the second survey, "The Student Follow-Up Survey, was designed for students who did not plan to return to WCC. In March 1991, the "Student Intent Survey" was distributed in freshman composition and remedial English classes to approximately 1,650 students, and 1,393 usable responses were returned. Responses to this survey included the following: (1) 55.7% of the respondents reported that their primary reason for attending WCC was to transfer to a four-year college; (2) 72.9% planned to enroll at WCC the following term, and 16.7% were undecided; (3) 61.7% indicated that they planned to graduate from WCC along with students in the Certificate program (77.5%), students between 30-49 years old (76.6%), and Hispanics (70.1%) all of whom indicated that they planned to graduate from WCC in substantially higher percentages than other groups; (4) 36.2% of the students intended to obtain a Bachelor's degree, and 24.5% intended to get a Master's degree; (5) only 20.8% were were attending WCC full-time; (6) most of the respondents were working, with 19.4% employed full-time, 20.8% working between 21 and 34 hours per week, and 27.5% working between 11 and 20 hours per week; and (7) 96.8% of the students indicated that they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with WCC. Attainment and persistence figures for the 1990 freshman class suggest that there might be some disparity between the expressed goals of the students and their patterns of continuing enrollment, graduation, and transfer. The two survey instruments are attached. (MAB)

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ED 372 783

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STUDENT INTENT SURVEY

May, 1991

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STUDENT INTENT / ATTRITION SURVEY

WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE: SPRING 1991

A Report of Findings

Purpose of Survey

In Fall 1991 two companion student surveys (Attachments A and B) were developed by the Office of Institutional Research in cooperation with the Dean of Students to assess reasons for student attrition at WCC.

The first survey, called the "Student Intent Survey" was designed to learn why a student enrolled at WCC, whether he or she intends to return the following semester, and whether he or she plans to graduate from WCC.

The second survey called "The Student Follow-up Survey" was designed to be sent to students who indicated they did not intend to return to WCC to learn the following: (1) why they did not intend to return, (2) what they will be doing, instead, and (3) to obtain their evaluation of various academic and non-academic students services.

This is a report on the results of the Student Intent Survey.

Methodology

In March 1991 the Student Intent Survey was distributed by English faculty members to freshmen English composition classes and remedial English classes. Approximately 1,650 were distributed and 1,467 were returned within four weeks. Of that, 1,393 were usable and comprise the total number of respondents for the survey.

Since the survey is not a random sample, the results can not be said to be representative of the entire population of credit students taking freshman English and remedial English classes at WCC. The high response rate (84%), however, makes the results a very good indicator.

Profile of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the students who responded roughly reflect those of the entire freshmen student body: 47.7% were males and 52.3% females; 67.8% were white, 17.3% Black, 9.6% Hispanic, 2.8% Pacific Island, 0.3% Native American and 1.1% foreign born. With regard to age, 60.5% were under 22, 24.5% were 22 to 29, 13.8% were 30 to 49, 1.1% were 50 to 65, and only one person was over 65.

In the case of characteristics such as grade point average, curriculum, and full-time/part-time status, the sample is less reflective of the entire 1990 Fall credit student body, although reasonably close. The sample showed 23.8% were in an AA program, 30.2% in an AS, 31.5% in an AAS, 2.9% in a Certificate program and 11.6% were not enrolled in a curriculum; 68.4% attended full-time and 31.6% part-time. Attachment C provides a comparison of the demographics of the sample to the entire Fall 1990 student body.

Findings

The survey consists of eight questions. A summary of the responses is as follows:

What Is Your Primary Reason for Attending Westchester Community College?

Well over half (55.7%) of the respondents reported that their primary reason for attending WCC was to transfer to a 4-year college. Of this group, an exceptionally high percentage of students in the AA curriculum (72.6%) reported their intention to transfer as their primary reason for attending WCC as did those with an Asian/Pacific background (66.7%) and those under the age of 22 (68.9%)

Almost one-fifth (18.4%) of the students, however, replied that their primary reason for attending was to "Prepare For Their First Career." An unusually high percentage of Hispanic students (28.4%) and students in the Certificate curriculum (40.0%) selected this response.

Of the other possible responses the results were as follows: "Personal Interest" (12.0%) with the age group of 50 to 65 having an unusually high percentage (25%) compared to other age categories; "Prepare for a Career Change" (8.6%), and "Improve Job Skills" (5.3%).

Of the students attending full-time, almost two-thirds (63.8%) have as their primary purpose to transfer. Of the students attending part-time, 38.2% plan to transfer.

Do You Plan To Enroll At Westchester In The Next 15 Week Term?

Nearly three-fourths of the students (72.9%) said "yes" when asked if they planned to enroll at WCC next semester. Of this group, an exceptionally high percentage of those in the age category of 30 to 49 (86.5%), and Hispanics (80.6%) replied "yes."

Those students not enrolled in a curriculum are to be noted for the low percentage (63.0%) who replied they would be attending next semester.

Another 16.7% of the students were "Undecided" about whether they would return. As might be expected, a higher percentage of students with a GPA below a 2.00 (21.4%) were "Undecided" than in any other category. Another one-tenth (10.3%) replied "no" they were not going to enroll next semester.

Do You Plan to Graduate From Westchester?

Over three-fifths (61.7%) of the students indicated that they planned to graduate from Westchester Community College. Students in the Certificate program (77.5%), students in the age category of 30 to 49 (76.6%), and Hispanics (70.1%) indicated they planned to graduate from WCC in substantially higher percentages than other groups.

Those not enrolled in a curriculum (42.0%) and those with a grade point average below a 2.00 (46.7%) had noticeable lower percentages of students planning to graduate from WCC.

Of those who replied "No" they did not intend to graduate from WCC(17.5%), students of an Asian/Pacific background (25.6%), and those in the AA curriculum (24.1%) had the highest percentages of this response.

Of those who replied "Undecided" (20.7%), those 50 to 65 years old (31.3%), those not enrolled in a curriculum (26.5%), and those in the AA curriculum (25.6%) reported so in higher percentages than those in other categories.

What Is The Highest Academic Degree You Intend To Obtain?

Students attending WCC have high ambitions on arriving at Westchester Community College. Well over one-third (36.2%) intend to get a Bachelor's degree. More than one-fourth (24.5%) intend to get a Master's Degree or higher. Only 22.2% plan to stop after obtaining an Associate Degree and less than 5% plan to obtain only a Certificate degree or none at all. Those who "Don't Know" comprised 13% of the sample.

The most ambitious groups can be found among the foreign born, 46.7% of whom intend to get a Masters Degree or above, and those in the AA curriculum, 35.5% of whom intend to do the same.

Of those who strive for an Associate Degree only, the largest percentages can be found in the age groups 50-65 (43.8%), 30 to 49 (33.9%) and among the Hispanics (26.1%).

Those who strive for a Bachelor's degree only can be found in the largest percentages among the foreign born (46.7%), those in the AS curriculum (40.5%) and males (39.6%).

If You Are Currently Attending Full-time Do You Intend To Continue Full-Time Next Semester.?

One-fifth (20.8%) of the sample was not attending full-time. Of the remaining group attending full-time, four-fifths (80.5%) intended to return full-time, 10.6% were "undecided" and 7% did not intend to return.

How Many Hours Per Week Are You Employed This Semester?

It should come as no surprise that a large percentage of WCC students are working. The extent to which this is so, however, is remarkable. Approximately one-fifth of the students (19.4%) reported working full-time (35 hours or more). Another fifth (20.8%) reported working between 21 hours to 34. The largest percentage (27.5%), however, are working between 11 and 20 hours a week. Only one-fifth (20.5%) reported not working at all.

As might be expected, the percentage of students working full-time (about one-fifth) and attending WCC full-time is much lower (27.4%) than those working part-time. This group comprises only 7.8% of the students surveyed. Over three-fourths (78.3%) of the students working between 21 hours and 34 hours, however, reported, attending full-time. They comprise one fifth of the students surveyed (20.8%) Over four-fifths (84.9%) of those working between 11 and 20 hours a week attend full-time. They comprise over one-fourth of the students surveyed (27.4%).

The groups most likely to be working full-time are those in the age brackets of 22 to 29 (32.3%), and 30 to 39 (33.9%), those in a Certificate degree program (32.5%), and those not enrolled in a curriculum (30.2%). Also to be noted is the high percentage of students working full-time (44.5%) whose ethnic background is unidentified on the system.

Of the students not working at all, the largest percentages were in the age category of 30-49 (33.9%) and Blacks (29.4%).

How Much Longer Do You Plan To Remain At Westchester?

Keeping in mind that most of the students responding are second semester freshmen, the response to this question is an indication of how long a student intends to take to graduate or transfer.

Almost one-third of the students (31.0%) plan to remain at Westchester Community College for one more year. Of this group, those in the Certificate program (42.5%), and those with a GPA greater than a 3.00 (39.0%) responded in the highest percentages.

The next largest percentage of students (27.4%) "Don't Know" how much longer they intend to remain at WCC. The highest percentage of students in doubt were students not enrolled in a curriculum (42.0%).

A little over one-fifth of the students (21.8%) intend to stay for two more years, most noticeably the group in the 30-49 age bracket (37.0%).

Overall, How Would You Rate Your Westchester Experience?

The satisfaction level of this sample of students attending WCC is extremely high. Over one-fourth (26.1%) were "very satisfied" with their Westchester experience. Another seventy percent (70.7%) reported they were "satisfied." Moreover, if these two responses are combined, 96.8% of the students are either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their experience at WCC. Of the very small percentage that expressed dissatisfaction (3.2%), the largest percentages were those with a grade point average below 2:00 (4.9%) and Blacks (4.6%).

It should be noted that with a question such as this, there is always the possibility that the integrity of the student's response is compromised by the fear he will be "found out."

Nevertheless, the extraordinarily high percentage of positive responses is a strong indication that students attending WCC are basically positive about their experience here.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Far Reaching Goals

One thing stands out in particular from the results of this survey: The "intent" or goals of freshman students are high and far reaching.

Almost three-fourths (72.9%) intend to return next semester. Three-fifths (59.7%) intend to return full-time. Over three-fifths (61.7%) intend to graduate from WCC. Over half (55.7%) intend to transfer to a four year college, and nearly four-fifths (82.9%) intend to get an Associate degree or better.

A follow-up study of this same sample of students will be conducted next year after graduation and the following year to measure the disparity between their "intentions" or goals and whether or not they met them.

Actual Attainment

Some idea of their performance can be gaged, however, by looking at the actual performance of the previous year's freshman class (1989), assuming that the record of the 1990 freshman class will be similar.

In Fall 1989, 3,507 students enrolled at WCC for the first time including transfers. Slightly over two-fifths (44.1%) or 1,548 returned the following Fall, 1990 semester, a considerable drop from the expressed goals (72.5%) of the entering Fall 90 class. The difference was 28.4 percentage points less.

A dramatic difference also occurred between the percentage in the 1990 class who intended to return full-time (59.7%), and the percentage in the 1989 class who actually did (27.6%). The difference was more than thirty percentage points less (32.1%).

Figures are not available on the number of students who transferred. Figures are available, however, on the number of students who enrolled first-time in Fall 1989 (3,507) and graduated in two years in May 1991 with an Associate or Certificate Degree from WCC (77).

Only 5.0% of the entering class of Fall 1989 graduated in Spring 1991, a considerable difference from the 61.7% who intended to get a Degree, although not necessarily in two years. (A recent study shows that after the third year of attending, the percentage of students graduating with an Associate Degree jumps to around 20 percent).

Factors Accounting For the Disparity

What factors account for the disparity between the intent or goals of these students and their actual performance?

One factor that it is not, is an underlying dissatisfaction with Westchester Community College. The very high percentage of students who are either "very satisfied" (26.1%) or "satisfied" (70.7%) with WCC, a combined total of 96.8%, is too great to attribute this as being a significant factor.

One factor that most certainly is important is the grade point average of a student. Based on the Registrar's records, 45.7% had GPAs below a 2.00, the necessary GPA to graduate. Students who have a GPA below this are not encouraged by their counselors to take a full load. Moreover, a new 1991 policy stipulates that students with a GPA below 1.75 with less than 32 credits are to be put on "Academic Restriction." They are subsequently limited to taking no more than eight charged credits a semester.

Regrettably a question concerning the importance of cost in influencing students' ability to attend was not asked. The high percentage of those working (79.5%), however, is a strong indication that it is a factor.

Conclusion

In assessing the ability of students to reach the goals they set for themselves on entering WCC, this survey provides some fairly good data on what their initial goals were. Their goals are ambitious and far-reaching.

The survey, however, is ill equipped, of course, to assess the subsequent success of students nor is data currently available that will allow us to do so. The main reason for this is the lack of information on the number of students who successfully transfer to a four year colleges. Since well over half (55.7%) had this as their primary goal for coming to WCC, any assessment of student success without this data is inadequate. Figures on the transfer rate are currently being compiled by the Office of Institutional Research and may be available by January, 1992.

One thing is certain, however. With such a large percentage of students having as their primary goal the desire to transfer to a four year college, the use of the number of degrees granted as a measurement of success for assessment purposes is very misleading.

It should be kept in mind also, that a small percentage (2.7%) never intended to get a degree in the first place and a rather significant percentage (13.0%) were undecided. Moreover, there is reason to believe that a significant number of students who have the necessary credits to graduate or almost that amount, transfer without graduating.

Future assessment studies must take these factors into consideration in providing an accurate picture of the success of WCC to help meet the goals of the students who enroll here.

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WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENT INTENT SURVEY

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

Name Date

USE NO. 2 PENCIL ONLY

1. Do you plan to enroll at Westchester in the next 15 week term?

Yes
No
Undecided

2. Do you plan to graduate from Westchester?

Yes
No
Undecided

3. What is the highest academic degree you intend to obtain?

None
Certificate (one year)
Associate Degree (AA, AS, AAS, two year degree)
Bachelor's (BA, BS, four year degree)
Master's or higher
Don't know

4. What is your primary reason for attending Westchester?

Personal interest
Transfer to a four year institution
Prepare for first career
Prepare for career change
Improve job skills

5. How much longer do you plan to remain at Westchester?

1 term
1 year
2 years
3 years
More than 3 years
Don't know

6. How many hours per week are you employed this semester?

None
1-10
11-20
21-34
35 or more

7. If you are currently attending full time (12 credit hours or more per semester) do you intend to continue full time next semester?

Yes
No
Am not currently attending full-time
Undecided

8. Overall, how would you rate your Westchester experiences?

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied

COMMENTS:

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Attachment B:

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WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENT FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

Name	Date

USE NO 2 PENCIL ONLY

1. What was your primary reason for attending Westchester?

Personal interest
Transfer to a 4-year institution
Prepare for a first career
Prepare for a career change
Improve job skills

2. Did you achieve this objective by the time you left Westchester?

Yes
No

3. Why did you leave Westchester? (Please choose the one best answer)

Did not intend to return
Moved Away
To enroll in an other college
To work
Academic difficulties
Could not afford to return
Dissatisfied with Westchester
(please describe below)
Couldn't get into course of choice
Other
(please describe below)

4. Please rate the following aspects of your Westchester experience:

	VERY GOOD	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	DID NOT USE
Admissions	○	○	○	○	○
Registration	○	○	○	○	○
Finical Aid	○	○	○	○	○
Counseling	○	○	○	○	○
Food Services	○	○	○	○	○
Bookstore	○	○	○	○	○
LRC(Library)	○	○	○	○	○
Testing Center	○	○	○	○	○
Faculty	○	○	○	○	○
Learning Assistants	○	○	○	○	○
Student Activities	○	○	○	○	○
Open Space	○	○	○	○	○

5. Do you plan to return to Westchester?

Yes, within the next year
Yes, sometime
Undecided
no

6. Are you enrolled at another college in a degree program?

Yes, but not in a degree program
Yes, full-time (12 or more units)
Yes, part-time (12 or less units)
No, not enrolled

If yes, at what institution?

7. Are you currently employed?

Yes, full-time
Yes, part-time
No, looking for a job
No, not available for employment

8. We would appreciate your comments about your experience at Westchester:

ATTACHMENT C

Profile of Respondents Compared to Fall 1990 Actuals

April, 1991

Of the 1,393 respondents 47.7% were males and 52.3% females.

Sex of Respondents	Number	Percent	Fall 1990 Actual
Female	729	52.3%	54%*
Male	664	47.7%	46%

The ethnic make-up reflects the freshman 1990 class.

Ethnic Background	Number	Percent	Fall 1990 Actual
Black	241	17.3%	14%
Hispanic	134	9.6%	7%
Pacific Is.	39	2.8%	3%
Nat. American	4	0.3%	.0%
White	945	67.8%	70%
Foreign Born	15	1.1%	1%
Unknown	15	1.1%	4%

The percentage of full-time students is substantially greater than the Fall 1990 actual.

Attendance	Number	Percent	Fall 1990 Actual
Full-time	953	68.4%	41%
Part-time	440	31.6%	59%

The percentages in the AA and AS curricula are greater than the Fall 1990 actual.

Degree Program	Number	Percent	Fall 1990 Actual
AA	332	23.8%	17.1%
AS	420	30.2%	22.1%
AAS	439	31.5%	27.7%
CERT	40	2.9%	3.8%
No Curriculum	162	11.6%	25.4%

More than one-fourth have a GPA of 3.00 or above.

Grade Point Average	Number	Percent	Fall 1990 Actual
3.00 or Above	367	26.3%	35.1%
2.00 to 2.99	389	27.9	30.7%
Below 2:00	637	45.7%	34.2%

Three-fifths are under 22 years of age.

Age of Student	Number	Percent	Fall 1990 Actual
Under 22 years	843	60.5%	51.3%
22 to 29	341	24.5%	27.1%
30 to 49	192	13.8%	18.9%
50 to 65	16	1.1%	1.1%
Over 65	1	0.1%	0.1%